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PP RUEHAG RUEHAST RUEHBI RUEHCI RUEHDF RUEHIK RUEHLH RUEHLD RUEHLZ

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DE RUEHAA #0127 0250450

ZNR UUUUU ZZH

P 250450Z JAN 08

FM AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0138

INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE

RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE

RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE

RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 3292

RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 1108

RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 0978

RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 1547

RHMFIUU/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL

RUCPDOC/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC

RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC

RUEAAIA/CIA WASHDC

RUEKJCS/Joint STAFF WASHDC

RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC

RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC

RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 2144

UNCLAS ASHGABAT 000127

SIPDIS

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STATE FOR SCA/CEN, SCA/PPD, DRL, EEB

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ECON](#) [EIND](#) [ETRD](#) [SCUL](#) [SOCI](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN'S PROJECT RUNWAY: MINISTRY OF TEXTILES AND CHINA TEAM UP ON A FASHION SHOW

¶1. (U) Sensitive but unclassified. Not for public Internet.

¶2. (SBU) When one thinks of haute couture and super models, one normally does not think of Central Asia. Nevertheless, on January 18, Turkmenistan's Ministry of Textile Industry and the Chinese Embassy teamed up on a fashion show that took place on the top floor of the Altyn Asyr shopping center. With the flashing lights, up-tempo music, and a smooth impresario, one could almost close one's eyes and imagine you were sitting along the runway in Milan or Paris. Almost.

¶3. (SBU) The two-part show featured local models from the Ministry's modeling house wearing outfits made from silk, taffeta, and velvet imported from China. The runway and seating mirrored exactly what one would see elsewhere. The Chinese collection, which came first, featured updated versions of costumes from Chinese ethnic minorities (heavy emphasis on Muslim minorities, like the Uighurs and the Hui, only with midriff-baring tops, tight slacks and fanciful head coverings). In addition, there were modern versions of the traditional "chipao" dress for women, as well as flashy Chinese jackets modeled by clearly embarrassed male models. After an interlude in which costumed Turkmen male dancers performed a traditional dance, the focus moved to Turkmenistan-designed clothing. In the first of these collections the Turkmen influences were especially strong, but the links to home grew increasingly weak and the clothing became increasingly cutting-edge as the models worked their way through collection after collection. At the end, the designer, Larisa Farafonova, came out to accept the applause of the audience, which appeared to be made up primarily of diplomats, Ministry of Textiles officials, and Turkmen elite.

Throughout the show, cameramen and photographers snapped and recorded the proceedings, and an article on the event was featured on the culture page of the January 23 edition of "Neutralniy Turkmenistan."

¶4. (SBU) While featuring the products on offer by the Ministry of Textiles was one point of the show, the other seemed to be to demonstrate the close cooperation between Turkmenistan and China in this area. The wife of the Chinese

Ambassador opened the show, praising the people and culture of Turkmenistan. She also sat next to the Minister, Jemal Goklenova (a relative by marriage of President Berdimuhamedov), throughout the show. At the end, the two walked off arm-in-arm to the buffet of Chinese food.

15. (SBU) COMMENT: This fashion show was one more demonstration that Turkmenistan is increasingly adopting the elements of international culture. Turkmenistanis celebrated with a vengeance this past New Years holiday, complete with adorned trees, Grandfather Frost, and all the trimmings, after years of the holiday being discouraged under the former president, Niyazov. Berdimuhamedov has recently announced that it is time to refurbish the State Circus and old movie theaters, build a new world-class movie theater, and make new opera productions. And it certainly seemed as if whoever had produced the fashion show, which was entertaining, had watched the fashion channel via satellite very carefully and tried to recreate all the elements in order to make it conform to international standards. END COMMENT.

HOAGLAND